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ABSTRACT

The paper considers postsecondary educational support for deaf students and describes the program at Jacksonville (Alabama) State University which provides support services for sensory impaired individuals wishing to attend college. A definition of postsecondary education is provided. The paper discusses the need for postsecondary education by this population, levels of functioning of incoming deaf freshmen at Jacksonville, typical characteristics of most deaf students, and what parents and teachers can do to help. (DB)

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PREPARING DEAF STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE
What Parents and Teachers Can Do

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Jacksonville State University has for the past four years provided support services for sensory impaired individuals who wish to attend college. The information gleaned from the literature in the area of postsecondary support as well as evidence from four years of experience is described herein for the purpose of informing interested individuals of the potential pitfalls which most deaf students will face as well as practical suggestions for reducing the chances of these occurring.

DEFINITION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

In general in the literature, postsecondary education is considered to be anything in which the individual engages after high school. This includes vocational and technical school, colleges, graduate programs and universities, and continuing education. The most prevalent of these programs for hearing impaired individuals are the vocational and technical schools. Many of these vocational schools provide support services for this population.

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Continuing education is becoming more and more popular among the deaf population as many deaf adults graduated from high school before services at the postsecondary level were available. These individuals are now in mid-career and are raising families so are unable to return to an academic environment full-time. In addition, with today's changing work environment, retraining and upgrading of skills are essential.

Support at mainstream colleges and universities has in the past been very sparse.

NEED FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

At the Third Biennial Conference on Postsecondary Education of the Hearing Impaired which was held in Knoxville, Tennessee, in April of 1988, demographer Ken Nash from NTID outlined the changing features of the work force which will influence employability of the hearing impaired in the years to come. Clearly, the population of the United States is changing; therefore, how we as teachers prepare our children for the future is going to be critical. Some factors Dr. Nash mentioned are these:

a) Since 1972, the fertility rate has been below replacment level. It is 1.7 children for white, 2.3 for blacks, and 2.9 and rising for Hispanics. Minorities will soon be in the majority.

b) Twenty two percent of all six year olds today live below the poverty level. Issues surrounding the English Language are going to become greater and greater as bilingual individuals from impoverished environments bring these problems in greater numbers to the schools.

We are already seeing the impact of the above in colleges today. Combining first generation college attendees with blacks, non-English speaking individuals and handicapped individuals, the minority student is now the majority on most campuses.

The trend in the future will be for a small number of well-off, well-educated individuals to have their pick of jobs while a large number of poor and poorly educated individuals fight for the lower level positions. For this reason, GOOD LANGUAGE SKILLS are going to become even more critical and will become a key variable in separating well educated individuals from poorly educated individuals. Further, jobs of the future are changing. The fastest growing area is that of human services, which require good communication skills. Jobs traditionally held by hearing impaired individuals are actually on the decline. Language skills will become even more and more of a problem.

The implication of the demographics is clear: We must improve our students' communication skills so they can get in college, can stay in college, and can get jobs which are less likely to become obsolete. Parents and teachers must begin NOW to foster a desire to attend college and the independence and language skills necessary to handle it.

LEVELS OF FUNCTIONING OF INCOMING DEAF FRESHMEN

The typical hearing impaired young adult who has entered our program in the past four years is functioning across the board at around the level of his or her 13 year old hearing

counterpart. This diminished level of maturity is noted in individuals from all program and communication options. We have served students from urban and rural mainstream programs and from day and residential institutional programs from four different states and the patterns remain consistent from student to student to student. Levels of functioning around the early teen years are consistent across all areas from vocabulary and syntax to reading, immature perspective-taking, moral development, and awareness of occupational choices.

A modified version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised was given to all the students. The target vocabulary item was signed, gestured where appropriate, spoken, and shown in print to maximize the likelihood that the concept would get across to the individual through one of the modalities. Some might express concern that this is inadequate to get the concept across and that students might perform better given different instruction, however, this would receive in the academic classroom, so it may be viewed as a good indicator of how much the hearing impaired individual is gleaning from his professor. Unfortunately, with even the best efforts at presenting the concept, the HIGHEST age equivalent score attained by any of the students was 12 years 9 months. This evidence supports our contention that the average individual who enters as a freshman is functioning in the early teenage range.

The Test of Syntactic Abilities was given to most of the students. Interpretation of scores was modified for use by the program based on our actual experiences. We have found that if

an individual gets less than 75 percent of the items in each of the categories, then he or she will be unable to manage college level material. In only one case was there an exception and this individual was more than 15 years older than the average incoming freshman.

The Reading Comprehension subtest of the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement was given to most students. Experience has shown us that an individual must have at least a grade equivalent score of middle to late sixth grade or he will rarely make it past the first semester. Few of the students tested had reading scores much beyond the sixth grade. All those students who had reading scores less than this have dropped out, flunked out or transferred to Gallaudet or to a vocational or technical school.

Selman (1976) outlined six levels of perspective-taking which are developmental in nature and through which all individuals mature. The EGOCENTRIC LEVEL is the first level, occurring around two to three years of age. In this level, the child does not recognize that another individual may interpret the same social event or course of action differently from the way he or she does. The child in the SUBJECTIVE LEVEL begins to understand that other people's thoughts and feelings may be the same as or different from his own. In the SELF-REFLECTIVE LEVEL the child recognizes that other people view subjects from different perspectives. This level occurs somewhere around the fourth and fifth years of life. He is VERY aware of and concerned about what other people think or say about him. His feelings are easily hurt.

All issues are either black or white. Our staff has subjectively identified about one-quarter of the incoming freshmen to be in this level. Most of the deaf students in our program seem to fall within the THIRD PERSON DYADIC LEVEL where one is capable of infinite regress; that is, the individual may be heard to say such things as, "He said that she said that I said that you said that you don't like my hair so I'm mad at you." This level of perspective taking is generally associated with individuals up to 12 years of age. While on the one hand this level is desirable as a minimum, it poses problems as a maximum and most of our students fall within this level. Minimally, the level allow students to take a third person's point of view. Academically this is essential since the ability to understand history, sociology, and literature, to name a few, are dependent upon third person perspective-taking. Unfortunately, however, the individual who gets stuck in this level often attributes thoughts and feelings to another person and thus functions immaturely socially. The QUALITATIVE SYSTEMS LEVEL is the level where individuals begin to accept the gray areas of reality and can compare and contrast different perspectives. Beginning after 13 years of age, this level is characterized by the individual's ability to recognize that mutual perspectives occur at many levels. It is assumed that the college level student has the ability to deal at this level of abstraction, but experience has shown us that most of our students fall within the previous level, adding further evidence to our contention that the average incoming deaf

freshman is functioning academically, socially, and emotionally somewhere around that of his sixth or seventh grade hearing counterpart.

Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) outlined three levels and six stages to moral development. The PRECONVENTIONAL level is comprised of Stage 1 and 2. Preconventional children are responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad. They interpret rules in terms of consequences meted out by those who wield the rules. Stage one has a Punishment and Obedience Orientation during which the child has no conception of underlying moral issues. They obey because someone bigger tells them to do so. The Stage two child follows an Instrumental-Relativist Orientation which requires that good begets good and bad begets bad. These two stages last until around the fifth year of life. In the CONVENTIONAL LEVEL loyalty to family or group, maintaining the status quo, and conformity for its own sake reign. Stage three in this level follows a Good Boy/Nice Girl Ethic whereby behavior becomes judged by intention. This stage generally runs from five to seven years of age and is replaced by the Law and Order Orientation of Stage four which continues until around eleven. Maintaining social order and doing one's duty are of paramount concern. Level three is the POST-CONVENTIONAL LEVEL. Stage five, running from 11 to 14 years of age is the Legalistic/Orientation stage. The individual in this stage is capable of looking at the rights of the individual within the context of the larger society. Most of the students who have entered the program at Jacksonville appear to be

functioning in stage four where rules are rules and we follow them because they are there. Some individuals appear to be able to debate issues pertaining to stage five, but these individuals are few. Stage six or the Ethical Principles Stage is the most advanced, requiring the individual to understand that principles are logical, universal and consistent. That most of our students deal with crises and problems from a viewpoint of expendiency excludes them from this group.

One final theory upon which we have developed our contention, that deaf college freshmen function at an educational, social, and emotional level below their hearing counterparts is that presented by Ginsberg (1951). Ginsberg studied the stages of development of occupational choice and delineated three major types of choices. The reason this theory is pertinent to the college level deaf individual is that this is what college is all about. Granted, the typical hearing college freshman changes majors with frequency, but the hearing impaired individual makes his choices and changes them based on information and feelings for the most part at a lesser level. Ginsberg calls his first level the level of FANTASY CHOICE in which children from six to eleven years are engaged. Career choices are based on fantasy experiences such as those of community roles (fireman, policeman), television roles (Superman, Wonder Woman), and interest roles (train engineer). Surprisingly, some of the entering freshmen, when questioned about their intended careers and majors described roles in this level. One young woman wanted to pursue a degree in criminal justice because she wanted to be a crossing guard

and one young man wanted to pursue a degree in engineering because he wanted to drive trains. Most students had very little understanding of what a degree is all about. When questioned about his degree choice, one young man asked "What do you mean by a degree? Like 60 degrees or 70 degrees?" The next level is that of TENTATIVE CHOICES which occurs in the normally developing individual from around 11 to 15 years of age. During this phase, the individual is eliminating alternatives. Tentative choices are either peer oriented, unrealistic or possibly realistic. A peer oriented choice is one which everyone thinks of typically when exploring careers (doctor, lawyer, Indian chief). Some choices are unrealistic. One of our students, a female who weighed 280 pounds, wanted to become an astronaut. One student wanted to become an actuary because she had been told that they make a lot of money; however, she did ot know what an actuary does and she was particularly poor in the area of math skills, which are required for that career. Most of our students entering choice for a career is computer programming, but few realized what is involved and after some exploration, change this decision. Some students are making realistic choices. These seem to be the students who have had some work experience during their high school years. In the final level students make REALISTIC CHOICES. This occurs as the child transits from the middle teenage years to young adulthood.

Based on our students' academic performances, their social-emotional levels, and their career choices, we feel that the

average entering freshman is functioning at a level similar to his much younger hearing peers. This poses serious problems as the immature individual attempts to deal with issues and problems which require a more mature perspective.

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MOST STUDENTS

This section is written not from the perspective of the deaf students themselves but from the perspective of what we as case managers and counselors face on a day in day out basis. The attitudes and problems repeat themselves with great predictability.

1) Students coming from the institutions have very poor grammar skills and low vocabularies, but comprehend fairly well in sign and with tutoring. For the most part they are not successful unless they receive a great deal of outside tutorial help. Just having classes interpreted for them is not sufficient.

2) Students coming from the mainstream have slightly better grammatical skills but equally poor vocabularies. Many are incapable of following a lecture because they are poor lipreaders, do not know sign language, or have learned from years in mainstream secondary schools that, as long as they look as if they are paying attention they will get by and someone will explain the information to them. We say that these students have an "attending posture" but retain little from lectures. This group also requires a significant amount of direct tutoring.

3) Almost all the incoming freshmen are very irresponsible. They have poor study habits. Many report that they NEVER had homework in high school and most report requirements outside of class to have been minimal. The amount of outside work required in college comes as an absolute shock to most of them.

4) Many students seem to bring their parents to college with them; that is, they call home a lot and whine about how hard school is and how mean people are to make them work so hard. Gallaudet University refers to this as "the bitch factor." In addition most are extremely poor money managers and are always calling home for more. One young man literally brought his mother to school during freshman orientation to help him wash his hair as he had never done this for himself before.

5) All students do not realize how hard they will have to work. As a general rule of thumb, for every hour spent in class the student can expect to spend three hours in outside work; therefore, for a 12 credit semester load, the student can expect to spend 12 hours in class and 36 hours outside of class studying and doing assignments. The student who spends less time usually is failing by mid-semester.

6) The students do not realize that they will have to work harder than their hearing peers. Often we hear, "But my roommate never studies" or "The other kids never go to the library." Our students have to work harder for a number

of reasons. They are unaccustomed to studying and must learn how. They are hearing impaired and have to work harder to overcome the communication barriers. Most of them receive support from vocational Rehabilitation Services and must maintain a "C" average to maintain their support.

7) The students want outside help when THEY want it, not when it is available to them. The staff has regularly scheduled tutorial hours available at flexible times to meet the needs of the students, yet, a student will become angry and complain that we are not giving them enough help when we are unable to go to their dorms at night or when we refuse to allow them into our homes on a Sunday when their papers are due on Monday.

8) Few students have any notion of what they want as a major. It is critical that they explore this issue long before entering college so they do not waste their time. VRS supported students must complete their programs within eight semesters after which they must pay their own way. One or two changes in major can put graduation off up to a year.

9) The most crucial element in the students' satisfaction is their loneliness. Students from the mainstream and institutions alike have problems in making friends among the hearing students on campus. In more cases than not, when a student leaves college it is for social and emotional reasons rather than academic ones. Based on the information presented earlier that the average incoming freshman is functioning socially

and emotionally like his 13 or 14 year old hearing counterpart, it is not unexpected that this will happen. Place a hearing 13 year old in college and he will make inappropriate choices and have trouble making friends as well.

WHAT PARENTS AND TEACHERS CAN DO TO HELP

Although the problems described above are significant, they may not be insurmountable if parents and teachers work together at early enough ages to make the needed preparations. Be realistic about college. Not everyone is meant to achieve a college degree and even the most committed have problems.

The suggestions below are viewed by the staff in our project the minimum effort necessary to equip deaf students for college. Clearly, the better they are prepared, the better they will perform and the more satisfying their experience will be.

1) Expose your students to literature. We read children's stories with deaf children when they are little and need to continue this all the way through their educational experiences. Go to the local library and ask for graded lists of recommended literature. Have the students read at least two a year from start to finish, tearing each book apart sentence by sentence. However, don't stop here. READ as many of the other books on the list to them as possible. Read them, explain them, act them out, and in any way possible make the material available to them without burdening them with the barriers of their poor reading skills. In order to understand much of college

level material an individual must be able to view information from a third person's perspective. The best way to familiarize a student with a multitude of differing opinions is to share the problems, perspectives, and ideas of characters from literature with them. This will broaden their experiential base, help them see different ideas, and help them gain a better perspective on the multiplicity of possibilities in handling situations.

2) Require that students in high school do a minimum of two hours of homework in the evenings and four to six hours on the weekends. Be sure to give them realistic assignments, not just busy work. The student who is unaccustomed to studying independently will more than likely fail in college.

3) Explore careers with the students. We have found that individuals who have held after school and summer jobs are much more realistic about careers and majors and much more serious about studying.

4) Prepare your students to manage their own money. Daily we have students coming to the office because they have used up their allowances and have no money for food for the next two weeks or who need to purchase materials for a project but spent their money on a big weekend instead. Most students come to us assuming that we will make all the financial arrangements for them for their dorms, meal tickets, books, etcetera, and even expect us to be able to bail them out in a pinch for spending cash.

5) Encourage your students to become aware of current social trends. Some of our students are real "nerds" for lack of a better term. This may be due to overprotection from the family or school or a general lack of observational skills. Students do much better socially when they blend in with their hearing peers in terms of dress, hair style, and demeanor. For example, if hearing students routinely give "the high five" upon greeting one another, then teach this to your deaf students.

6) Give your students plenty of guided experience in meeting and interacting with hearing peers. If they have not become comfortable with this in high school, then they will not be able to do so in college.

7) Visit colleges in the students' junior year. Explain fully what a college degree will do for them and what will b expected of them. Once they are motivated to attend college you will have a year to work on the ideas listed herein.

8) Have your students talk with deaf individuals who have been successful in college. Be sure you choose as a role model an individual who has been successful or you may get some advice you were not expecting.

9) Encourage your students to find summer jobs. This will help expose them to possible careers as well as awaken them to the lack of opportunities available to the individual without an education. We have found that the more an individual has worked before coming to college, the more serious a student he is.

10) Require your students to keep journals and to write in them everyday. College level work involves an incredible amount of writing and most deaf students avoid this like the plague. Daily journals get them accustomed to writing and help them put their thoughts on paper. They are also a good source for noting vocabulary and grammar deficiencies which should be remediated.

11) Prepare your students to be able to make choices. Often it is not so much that a student will make a poor choice as it is that he just does not know how to go about making a choice. Weighing pros and cons and thinking a set of options through to its possible outcomes takes practice. Unless a student has had practice in making choices then he will do so based upon what other people tell him to choose, what seems easiest at the time, or what provides the most instant gratification. Most of the students who come to us are unaccustomed to making choices. When required to do so, they will either freeze and become upset or will "go hog wild" and engage in a series of seemingly random activities. College is full of choices from the simple such as what to choose from the cafeteria line to the complex such as what to major in or how to break away from a group of friends with which you really do not want to be involved.

12) Explain your students' audiograms to them. Many of our students have never seen their audiograms and have never had them explained to them. Every year we must counsel a group of individuals who have become very upset because for the first time somehow has told them the truth about their loss. This is especially true of the students from the mainstream. Upon learning that she had had a severe to profound hearing loss all her life, one student commented that she was greatly relieved because her whole life she had been told by her family that she had "just a little bit of a hearing problem." Tearfully she admitted to being a little bit depressed but also expressed great relief stating that she finally understood why things had always been so hard for her.

13) Work on vocabulary, vocabulary, vocabulary, and then vocabulary. This is extremely important. One student who was a very bright young man with a high IQ and a lot of motivation was struggling in his accounting course because, although he had worked after school for years, he had never run across the term "earn" before. It is no exaggeration that the average incoming college freshman has a vocabulary similar in range to his nine to twelve year old hearing counterparts. Get hold of the vocabulary lists in basal reading texts from first through sixth grade first and cover these in depth. Purchase a children's encyclopedia and cover the vocabulary here. Contact a English professor at a local university and ask for the basic word list

required of students in the remedial English courses. Go to your library and ask the librarian to give you a reference book with the ten or twenty thousand most commonly used words in the English language. Have your students read the newspaper and underline all the words with which they are unfamiliar then explain these. Watch television together and pick out words with which you feel your students may be unfamiliar. Read literature from recommended literature lists and question your students on relevant vocabulary. We cannot stress enough the seriousness of the problem we face with the vocabulary deficits of the average incoming freshman.

As previously mentioned, a college degree is not for everyone. It takes a great deal of prior experience, excellent reading skills, good knowledge of vocabulary, and a real commitment on the part of the student. It is hoped that this presentation has made the listener/reader more familiar with issues which will face the incoming deaf college freshman so that these students' college experiences will be maximally beneficial.

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